

# The People.

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SECOND EDITORIAL

## That Hoary-Headed Superstition

By DANIEL DE LEON

Considerable excitement seems to be prevailing just now among some of our friends among the “reform” editors upon the momentous question whether the Editor of THE PEOPLE is a “Beer-drinking German.” Lest the discussion grow uncomfortably heated, and above all, with the end in view of pinning a somewhat important moral to the controversy, we shall make free to enlighten the disputants.

The Editor of THE PEOPLE is neither “beer-drinking” nor “German.”

Much as he admires many admirable German qualities, he is not a German, either by birth, remotest ancestry, or collateral kinship. If there is any honor in being a German, he can not claim it; if there be any disgrace in it, he can not share it.

Neither, as it happens, is he “beer-drinking.” Whatever his pet beverage might be, he has no liking for the disgusting stuff among whose leading ingredients is Duryea’s dirty scab glucose.

But this silly question would not be worth even the little space here allowed it were it not for the circumstance that round and about it clusters a hoary-headed superstition, that much resembles the old myth concerning the Garden of the Hesperides.

The Garden of the Hesperides was originally placed by the Greeks on the East side of Italy; later, that region being explored, the myth of the Garden was transferred to the West of Italy; still later, further travels having brought that region within the known, the Hesperides traveled further West and were located in Spain; finally, the navigators having reached and thereby withdrawn Spain from the domain of myths, the Garden of the Hesperides was placed still further away West, somewhere in the Atlantic, whence the discovery of America drove it off and finally dispelled it altogether. It was ignorance of facts, ignorance of geography, coupled with the outpourings of fervid imaginations, that gave birth to the idea of the Garden of the

Hesperides, and that gave the Garden its successive locations. Knowledge of facts dispelled the myth.

It is very much so with the notion as to the nationality of Socialism and of its advocates. Born of imperfect information and of imaginative qualities, the notion at one time was general that Socialism was located in Germany, among Germans exclusively. Presently, the crushing Socialist votes and brilliant achievements of Socialists in France, Denmark, Italy, Belgium, England, etc., successively knocked silly the myth regarding the Germanic character of Socialism. By degrees, light entered the wool and percolated through the skulls of many, and Socialism was more and more recognized as a movement that has nothing to do with nationalities, but everything with the method of production. Like the myth concerning the Garden of the Hesperides, the myth that Socialism was German has finally lifted pretty generally.

Yet there are quarters where the myth still lingers and seems to be hugged like all soothing superstitions are. And we find that the last lingering manifestation of the old notion is that the readers of THE PEOPLE are mostly Germans, anything, in fact, except our English speaking fellow citizens.

On this subject we here wish to place on record for future reference the following statement derived from an intimate knowledge of the facts:

“The readers of THE PEOPLE are overwhelmingly English speaking, and not German. Its subscription list is an interesting page on the history of the movement at this early day. Nor will the historian of the future be able to understand the rapid progress that he will be able to record of Socialism in America from 1891 onwards without a glimpse at our lists, and an acquaintance with the elements that we are reaching and that support us.”

A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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